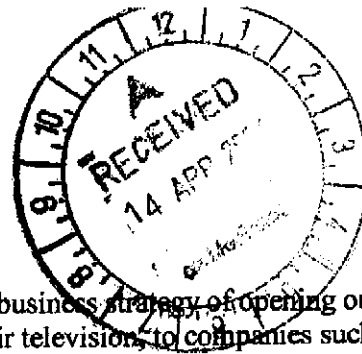


Monday, April 12, 2004



To the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties,

As an arts industry professional, I must ask you to consider the business strategy of opening our fledgling New Media market, specifically but not limited to non-free to air television, to companies such as Colombia Tristar, Fox Home Entertainment and Sony Pictures, A&E etc. Companies such as these exercise tremendous world market leverage by virtue of the volume of their production and the size of their current international market. Australian entertainment producers cannot begin to compete with such economy of scale.

Then I would ask you to consider the current provisions of the FTA for pay television:

- Expenditure requirement for local content on drama channels: 4%
- Current expenditure requirement for local content children's programs: 10% (cap of 20% after consultation with the United States)
- No ability to negotiate *higher* levels of local content into the future.

**Before the Free Trade Agreement is signed, Australia's cultural interests must, without caveat, be excluded.**

As a concerned citizen of this country, I ask Mr. John Howard and Mr. Mark Vaile to not hurry the negotiating process. The current timetable seems based on political expediency, not Australia's best interests. This committee must acknowledge the concern many Australians have for the rushed negotiation process, and the less than favourable outcomes it contains for many aspects of Australian trade: The Entertainment industry, Sugar industry and Beef industry being the most obvious areas of concern.

Please consider all aspects of our cultural identity - proceed as any good business person would - not with an eye for imagined future benefits based on 'good-will', but with an eye for legally binding clauses that provide the Australian entertainment industry with the tools to continue to create Australian culture for our diverse society.

Nicole Kidman, Kylie Minogue, Russell Crowe, Guy Pearce, Jason Donovan, Natalie Imbruglio, Holly Valance, Delta Goodrum, Kate Blanchett, Naomi Watts, Mel Gibson, Scott Hicks, Adam Elliot, Dean Cain, Roger Lerner, and others, are all Australian artists who provide Australia with a recognisable presence throughout the world. They all started their careers on locally produced television. That television was produced under quotas established for Australian local content on free to air television in the 1970's. We need similar safeguards for the television medium of the future - pay TV/cable. If this agreement does not exclude culture - what opportunity will there be for a new generation of actors and associated entertainment industry people to get a start?

Our goal should be to *increase* local content so the expression of Australian culture and the very real fiscal returns its entertainment industry provides can grow.

Yours sincerely,

**Matthew Crosby**  
**Victorian Branch Councillor**  
**Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance**